

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE

BRIEFER: GENERAL JERRY CANNON, DIRECTOR-GENERAL,
THE CIVILIAN POLICE ASSISTANCE TRAINING TEAM

SUBJECT: THE PROGRESS OF THE IRAQI POLICE

MODERATOR: CHARLES "JACK" HOLT, CHIEF, NEW MEDIA OPERATIONS,
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT.

MR. HOLT: General Cannon, we're ready when you are, sir.

GEN. CANNON: Okay, thank you, Jack.

Well, I guess it's good morning everybody.

Q Good morning.

Q Good morning.

GEN. CANNON: Well, this is my first time doing this, so I guess probably
I should introduce myself to the group. I don't know if -- did you have the
opportunity to see the bio?

MR. HOLT: Okay, did everybody get a chance to see the bio -- I sent that
out this morning? (Response off mike.) Okay, yes, sir.

GEN. CANNON: Okay, good.

Well, one of the things that's not mentioned in the bio is -- that's kind
of unique for me, is I'm with the Michigan Army National Guard, called to active

duty to serve in this capacity. And on the civilian side, I've been a police officer in the State of Michigan for 38 years.

So, with my civilian state police experience, coming into this role at CPATT, it's very introspective for me. And I'm not new to law enforcement, but this gives me a great opportunity to -- (audio interference) -- the major transitions that are going on in the country of Iraq, as far as public safety and security.

Let me go on. I've been here a little over a month now, so I'm the new guy on the job. And since I've been here I've been able to get around and visit some of the training sites and meet some of my Iraqi counterparts. And it's been very interesting to date. Some of my observations, since arriving, is obviously looking at some of the training; looking at the facilities.

My responsibilities primarily revolve around force generation, and sustainment, and decreasing the capacity of the police, as a governmental entity, to provide the services. So I think I'm well suited to that. I'm also, obviously, a military police officer. I've been in the military -- I started my career 40 years ago -- actually, it's 41 years just a couple of days ago, so I've been around awhile.

So, that's a little bit about me. I'm not sure if there's any other questions in that regard.

MR. HOLT: Okay, sir. Sounds like you are well-suited for this -- for this position.

With us on the line here for the DOD Bloggers Roundtable is Major General Jerry Cannon. He is the -- say, one month on the ground, the new director for the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team and -- say, you still fall under MNSTC-I, correct --

GEN. CANNON: Correct.

MR. HOLT: -- the Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq?

GEN. CANNON: Correct.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir.

Well, DJ, you were on the line first, why don't you get us started.

Q Yes, sir. About a month ago, the senior deputy minister from the Ministry of Interior was saying something about them expanding the Iraqi national police to about a brigade per province. I've also been noticing that they've been employing the Emergency Response brigades and provincial police almost like you would the Iraqi national police. Are they planning to fold those Emergency Response brigades into the Iraqi national police? And just how big are they growing the national police?

GEN. CANNON: The national police -- there is a plan. Matter of fact, I just had received a briefing this morning from Lieutenant General Hussein about their future plans. And there is a plan to probably grow them -- to probably try to stand up another division. So that'll probably push them up over -- they've got the numbers here -- I think that's going to push them up to about 40,000.

And it's a major undertaking. They have a lot of people in training, obviously. They are currently engaged in a number of very significant operations. So it's a great organization, in my opinion. They sort of fill the void between -- if you don't already know this, between the Iraqi army and the Iraqi local police, so to speak. So they're sort of like the Italian Carabinieri, they sort of have a national role, and they're very quick to deploy and very agile.

And the brief I received this morning talked about a number of the things that they want to undertake, which we are all very supportive of.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

Then, Dave.

Q Good afternoon, sir. Appreciate you being here. It's Dave Dilegge from Small Wars Journal.

Looking over the last year or so, it looks like you're making progress with the Iraqi police forces -- both the local, and now it seems on the national level. But there's still challenges, especially in light of a possible draw down here in the near future. What are your most -- what do you consider your biggest challenges? And a little bit of a follow on, what capabilities do you think you could use more of, or ones that you don't have that you would like? Thank you.

GEN. CANNON: I think the challenge -- the biggest challenge is generating the force. And I think we have -- we have a goal of trying to increase their ranks by about 100,000. And when we talk about -- in the Ministry of Interior, police, we're talking about a whole host of different types of organizations. Obviously, we've got the Iraqi police and the national police. We got -- we got one small organization, the River police here in Baghdad that I've taken a little special interest in, just trying to make sure that they're up to speed as well.

There's traffic police. We're going to -- we're going to evolve into a -- like an Oil police, and an Electric police just to protect that kind of infrastructure. But to answer your question on point, force generation is going to be a biggest challenge in getting the right people hired, and getting them through the -- you know, getting them screened and vetted, and then getting them into the academies -- and we've got 18 training centers out there -- getting that accomplished in a timely manner; and then getting them equipped; and getting them out into the stations to start functioning in the role that they're expected to assume.

Obviously, once we can fill that space, it would change the role for the Coalition Forces. So the dynamic is very fluid. It's obviously a role that we want them to assume when they're ready, and when the people are ready -- meaning, the people of the local community, to accept their local police and have the Coalition Forces sort of draw back into maybe some kind of an overwatch.

So, I think I answered your question. That was the number one priority for me is force generation.

MR. HOLT: All right. Thank you, sir.

And Bruce.

Q General, Bruce McQuain with qando.net.

I wonder if you could bring us up to date on the Carabinieri training that the -- I believe it's the national police have been going through. I assume that they've been through the first cycle where you're doing the 'training the trainer,' and I'm wondering how that's working out within the national police force now that they're out there training the rest of the force.

GEN. CANNON: Well, we just had the fourth class graduate just a few days ago. And it was a great ceremony -- great demonstration of that capability. The goal is to get everybody through that training, from a national police perspective. But as you start to look at what's involved, that may be a bridge too far.

So you're right, the model is going to be, hopefully, where we train the trainers, and have them, sort of, take that on. But, we are exploring the possibility of bringing more national police through, and possibly -- if we can generate the interest from the Carabinieri, for them to maybe increase the number of people involved in that training program, or redesign the program so we can put more people through it if they're not interested in increasing it.

But that is a great avenue for the national police to assume a different role as -- it's part of their -- it's part of their vision to have a role like this. They want to be the Carabinieri of the Middle East. And so this is certainly something that we would subscribe to. It certainly makes them much more professional in the way that they do their business and, you know, this is a -- this is a training program that the NATO mission has undertaken.

And so when we started to have these discussions about -- there's great interest in doing more of this, but it's not completely up to them, or up to us to make that happen, although it is desirous. The goal is to, at some point in time, somewhere along the way, if not all of them get trained by the Carabinieri, at least the Carabinieri will have training the national police and hopefully they can kind of carry it on in future iterations so everybody gets the idea of what the expectation is.

And they're very proud of that and they're very excited about that. And it does fit into their vision. The Lieutenant General Hussein has three visions for that organization, and this is one of them -- to be the Carabinieri of the Middle East. So I hope I answered your question.

Q You did. Thank you.

MR. HOLT: Okay, Jarred.

Q Yes, sir. Thank you for all that you do.

Could you talk a little about the Sawa, or the Sons of Iraq, the implementation of trying to organize them inside of the national police, or the local police, the army, and how that's going? I saw a report this week that 9,000 Sawa have been added to the Baghdad police, or the security forces. So, talk to that issue, please, sir.

GEN. CANNON: Well, I can speak to it in a very limited sense. I'm not up to speed on all those issues. As I said earlier, I'm the new guy on the block here. But there is a -- there is a concerted effort to try, as part of the unification and reconciliation, is to include the Sons of Iraq into the government of Iraq in a variety of ways. Some of them will be with security forces being either the army -- the one that I track the most is, obviously, with the police. There is a -- there is a ratio that everybody's trying to achieve. Obviously, it's going to take awhile to do all those things.

But I think I understand that -- if I understand it correctly, there's probably, maybe 100,000 that have been identified. And I can't tell you specifically what percentage of that number has been hired, but I know that there is a great effort into making that happen as we speak. I see a slide every day on hiring packets going through the process. And some of them are specifically marked "SOI," Sons of Iraq, for hiring into the police services.

MR. HOLT: All right.

Anything else? Anyone -- any other questions? Any other follow-ups?

Q I've got a follow-up. We could definitely spend all the time with enough questions for the General, but, one being, how -- since you've been there for only a short amount of time, but I'm sure you've spoken to your peers who've been there for a longer amount of time, what's been the greatest challenge which you see coming up, and what's, kind of, the greatest success in which you're going to try to keep pushing forward on?

GEN. CANNON: Well, I can tell you, I replaced Brigadier General Dave Phillips. A great guy; probably spent -- he just returned and took over as the commandant of the military police school, and he'll be chief of the, of the military police. Over the course of -- I don't know, three or four years, he's probably been here about two-and-a-half years or more. So, you know, he has developed great personal relationships with the counterpart. So I can obviously come in here and fill the position, but I can't quite have the experience and the relationship that he was able to develop over an extended period of time.

But, my biggest challenge is just getting my -- this is such a dynamic and fluid operation, and it's actually -- there is nothing that you can plan for. I mean, things are changing almost day to day. So projections that we made and plans that we had hoped to implement last week, something in between now and then has changed, and we're constantly having to adapt.

We're all moving forward. Everything is going in the right direction. So, it is an absolute exciting time to be here in the country, and see the differences in the eyes and in the hearts of the people -- the things that they talk about, the feelings they have about the future for Iraq. So, it's -- for me, personally, it's exciting to be here and to be a part of that.

So, my biggest challenge is trying to get my mind around all the things -- if you can imagine, how do you grow a police force this large in such a short period of time and try to overcome the obstacles that they have to face? I mean, just the time that I'm going to be here, between now and when I leave -- 100,000. Just pick any large police department in the United States, if we had to double, or triple or quadruple their size, you can imagine the problems that you'd have to face. And that's what they're trying to do.

So, it's a -- it's a host of issues with, you know, obviously infrastructure, and equipment, and all those kinds of things. But I (fall on ?) to a great leader, who sort of set us on a great azimuth. We got a great team here of professionals who are working hard every day. We have counterparts, not only with the police, but we also have counterparts in the Ministry of Interior who are -- we are all working to increase their capacity to kind of do these things and do them well, and show them that there is great advantages in planning.

And so those are all things that I look forward to helping them achieve a level of confidence and comfort, and see that it is the way ahead, and that's the way that they can sustain themselves and continue to be successful.

MR. HOLT: All right. And Staff Sergeant -- (inaudible) -- do you have any questions?

Q Sir, as a -- coming from the Guard, you bring a lot of things to the table -- both as your background as a military police officer, and what you're bringing (on from ?) the civilian side. How does your civilian skills apply to what you're doing there in Iraq today?

GEN. CANNON: Well, that's a great question. And we just had a -- for the police we had a mid-year review. And one of -- and it was very, it was very encouraging to see how they, how they addressed issues and reported out on some of their problems, and the way ahead. And we've had some subsequent meetings to deal with just four provinces in the north. We're trying to like identify local issues and what's the way ahead.

And what I can do to them, I can relate. For example, when the PDOP, the Provincial Director of the Police say, 'you know, I'm fighting for more equipment, more people, more infrastructure, and my voice is not getting heard at the highest levels.' I can relate to that, because I've been in those same situations in budget hearings trying to get resources for my agency. And at the same time I've been at the other side, where -- and I can completely appreciate the position that the Ministry is in, like, they're asking for more than we have.

And so those are great problems to have to contend with. And I can relate to that. And I shared a couple of examples with them, that I understood exactly, and that the best avenue to approach this is to just look at the art of the possible. We're probably not going to be able to give everybody everything that they want, but if we get some portion of that we should consider it a success.

And I think they understand that but, you know, as I said before, they are growing by such leaps and bounds that they are really stretched and challenged to do all the things to the level that they would want, and that we would probably want them to. But, my personal experiences, I think, are going to be a great help to me in relating to them. And in being -- you know, having been an administrator, I was a country sheriff, I can look at both sides of the issue, both as a provider and both as -- you know, as someone that's requesting funding to provide services.

So, I think my experience is going to serve me well. And I think it gives me an affinity with both sides that -- I can just tell you in the short time that I've been here, that my counterparts have had to deal with, we've really hit it off pretty good and we have a lot of things I common. Many of them are

professional police officers with long, enduring careers. Not all of them as old as myself, or as long as I've been doing this, but we were able to relate quite well, and we hit it off pretty good from the get-go.

So, I looked at -- I look at that as a great jumping off point.

MR. HOLT: Okay, excellent.

Any other follow-ups?

Q I would have another follow-up, then, if no one else is going to go.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

Q Sir, can you talk about -- obviously, the important point is, as the American forces eventually have to draw down, having the Iraqis be able to do for themselves -- and I know that's part of the plan, so, could you talk -- Are we building enough training schools? Is there enough technical expertise within the trainers to ensure that this process will become irreversible at some point to establish a professional police force?

GEN. CANNON: I think so. I think you hit the nail on the head. That is the design. We're moving in that direction. We are generating -- we are graduating officers, Iraqi police and national police, almost weekly. The ranks grow.

The confidence in the police, we actually have an instrument that -- I can't get into the details, but we just have a, like a poll that, sort of, measures the confidence that the people have, not only in their government but in their police. And I can tell you, every week it continues -- the trend is upward.

It's going to, obviously, take awhile to get it to a level where we would all say, that is success, but I can tell you where we know they all began from, we already consider it a great success. So, the formula is, not just that the police are ready to assume their role in providing for the security of this nation, but that the people are willing to accept them, and trust them, and have confidence in this idea and concept that we call the rule of law.

And it's a -- it's a very big shift in the, in the culture of this country. But it is embraced, and people are excited about it. And the police are just hoping that they don't fail. They want to do all the right things, and they ask great questions, and I think they're on the right track -- great morale. Obviously, there will be incidents and problems along the way, but we have that with any kind of large organization, not to exclude the police.

So, they're -- but they deal with that very effectively. They have great institutions in place for internal affairs, and inspector generals to go out and investigate matters of corruption. So, the issue is, when the people are ready -- the citizenry of the country of Iraq have the confidence that their public servants are out there serving their best interests, I think that's when we will really achieve the level of success that we could all look back upon and be proud of being a part of.

I hope I answered your question there. But, it's a -- it's an exciting time to be here for sure.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir. Thank you very much.

And just about out of time here. Do you have any closing comments for us, sir? Any closing thoughts?

GEN. CANNON: Well, I appreciate the opportunity to do this. This is the first time for me. Obviously, back at home I was -- I dealt with a different kind of media, but, you know, (Rivers ?) told me that this is a great group, so I appreciate what you do to help get the message out. And, hopefully, we'll get an opportunity to do this again in the future.

MR. HOLT: We certainly look forward to it, sir. We appreciate it very much.

With us on the phone for the DOD Bloggers Roundtable is Major General Jerry Cannon, the new director for the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team, out of the Multi-National Security Transition Command -- Iraq.

Thank you, sir, for joining us today.

GEN. CANNON: My pleasure.

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